

ECRP II

European Collaborative Research Projects

**Political Communication
Cultures in Western Europe –
A Comparative Study**



ECRP stands for European Collaborative Research Projects in the Social Sciences.

The ECRP Programme is designed to advance international research collaboration in the social sciences by encouraging European academic networking and pooling of research expertise. The Programme offers an opportunity to carry out problem-driven multilateral projects on any topic within the Social Sciences that demonstrates an international framework for research collaboration. Projects need not be exclusively European in their topic focus.

- ECRP is part of the EUROCORES Scheme that provides a flexible framework to support top class European research in and across all scientific areas.
- Research funding is provided by participating national research funding and research performing agencies.
- The European Science Foundation provides the Programme coordination and supports scientific networking of funded scientists in different EUROCORES ECRP Programmes.
- EUROCORES ECRP funds research in the social sciences that is only of the highest quality, is innovative and collaborative.

Political Communication Cultures in Western Europe – A Comparative Study

The objective of the international study **Political Communication Cultures in Western Europe** is to analyse the attitudes, norms, and values that drive the relationship between political actors and journalists and thereby detect the underlying patterns of political communication behaviours in Western democracies. Taken together, these orientations can be summarised under the term “Political Communication Culture” of a country.

By surveying 300 members of the political and media elite in each country, the study aims to systematically map out the existing types of political communication cultures in Western Europe and detect similarities and differences across countries.

In the first phase of the project, surveys will be carried out in seven Western European countries: Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland. In each of these countries, renowned university scholars in the field of political communication are conducting the investigation. In a second phase of the project, surveys are planned in France, Italy, and the UK.

The project is carried out under the auspices of the EUROCORES ECRP 2006 Programme. Funding is mainly provided by the national Funding Organisations of the participating countries (DFG, FWF, SNF, FIST, MEC, AKA, VR).

Project Website:
www.communication-cultures.eu

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Project Proceedings

Phase 1: Development of the Questionnaire

To find out about the attitudes of the political and media elites to the process of political communication, a standardised quantitative questionnaire has been developed which includes items relating to attitudes to: (1) the underlying structural conditions of the political and media system; (2) the influences of public opinion; (3) the generation and the framing of political issues and the techniques of issue-management; and (4) the normative orientations of the actors to their mutual relationship.

Phase 2: Identification of Relevant Samples

For each country, an individual sampling scheme has been developed which allows identification of the envisaged number of 300 members of the political and media elite. All sampling schemes follow a positional approach. The political elite is comprised of politicians in elected office, party elites and political spokespersons. In some countries, members of interest groups and the administration are included as well. The media elite consists of the most important journalists reporting on national politics in each country.

Phase 3: Field Work

The interviewing process itself is planned for spring 2008. For the interviews, the participating country teams will work with renowned research institutes in their respective countries. Interviews will be conducted mainly by telephone (CATI), supplemented by face-to-face interviews.

Phase 4: Data Analysis

After having completed phase 3, the responses will be thoroughly analysed using statistical methods. In doing so, truly comparative conclusions can be drawn about the state of political communication culture in Western Europe. We expect to identify various types of political communication culture and link them to specific institutional settings and actor constellations.

Phase 5: Dissemination of Findings

After completing the project, the relevant findings will be published together in a book. Dissemination of findings will also take place via scientific journals as well as presentations at international conferences. Findings, however, are not only of academic value, but also allow insight that is of practical relevance for politicians and journalists themselves. It is therefore envisaged to additionally disseminate the findings in conferences in the national capitals of the participating countries in order to discuss them with practitioners in the field.



“ **Political Communication Cultures in Western Europe** is a comparative study which aims at analysing the relationship between political elites and the media in seven Western European countries. We investigate the attitudes, norms, and values that generate the milieu in which politicians, communication advisers and journalists interact on a daily basis.

All in all, more than 2000 politicians, professionals and journalists will be interviewed in a standardized survey. By highlighting the specific milieus of political communication we expect to make a major contribution to understanding the representation of politics in modern Western media societies.

Our study is part of the European Science Foundation's EUROCORES programme for European Collaborative Research Projects (ECRP) which is an ideal format for conducting comparative research across Europe. With the support of the ESF the project brings together some of Europe's most renowned researchers in political communication. By coordinating and supporting our network the ESF provides us with a unique opportunity to study the cultures of political communication across Europe.

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Professor Barbara Pfetsch
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The aim of the European Collaborative Research (EUROCORES) Scheme is to enable researchers in different European countries to develop collaboration and scientific synergy in areas where European scale and scope are required to reach the critical mass necessary for top class science in a global context.

The scheme provides a flexible framework which allows national basic research funding and performing organisations to join forces to support excellent European research in and across all scientific areas.

The European Science Foundation (ESF) provides scientific coordination and support for networking activities of funded scientists currently through the EC FP6 Programme, under contract No. ERAS-CT-2003-980409. Research funding is provided by participating national organisations.

www.esf.org/eurocores

THE FOLLOWING NATIONAL FUNDING ORGANISATIONS SUPPORT THE ECRP SCHEME:

Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung (FWF)

Austrian Science Research Fund, Austria

Fonds voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek – Vlaanderen (FWO)

Research Foundation Flanders, Belgium

Research Promotion Foundation (RPF), Cyprus

Grantová agentura České republiky (GAČR)

Czech Science Foundation, Czech Republic

Forsknings- og Innovationsstyrelsen (FIST)

Danish Agency for Science Technology and Innovation, Denmark

Suomen Akatemia/Finlands Akademi (AKA)

Academy of Finland, Finland

Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS)

National Centre for Scientific Research, France

Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG)

German Research Foundation, Germany

The Icelandic Centre for Research (RANNÍS), Iceland

Irish Research Council for Humanities and Social Sciences (IRCHSS), Ireland

Fonds National de la Recherche (FNR)

National Research Fund, Luxembourg

Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek (NWO)

Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research, Netherlands

Norges Forskningsråd (NF)

Research Council of Norway, Norway

Polska Akademia Nauk (PAN)

Polish Academy of Sciences, Poland

Ministry of Scientific Research and Information Technology, Poland

Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia (MEC)

Ministry of Education and Science, Spain

Forskningsrådet för arbetsliv och socialvetenskap (FAS)

Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Research, Sweden

Vetenskapsrådet (VR)

Swedish Research Council, Sweden

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Swiss National Science Foundation, Switzerland

Türkiye Bilimsel ve Teknolojik Araştırma Kurumu (TÜBİTAK)

The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey, Turkey

Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) United Kingdom

European Collaborative Research Projects (ECRP) and the ESF Standing Committee for the Social Sciences (SCSS)

The ECRP Scheme is supported by the Standing Committee for the Social Sciences (SCSS) which is chaired by Professor Sir Roderick Floud (Professor Emeritus of London Metropolitan University); the Committee is composed of its members, leading scientists nominated by the ESF Member Organisations (research councils or academies) working in social sciences, and observers from other social science institutions. Along with national experts several observers from key social science institutions are also participating in two plenary meetings per year helping to shape the SCSS' role in the European Research Area.

The task of the committee is to advance Social Sciences on a European level by supporting innovative research ideas and approaches from the scientific community. Scientific agenda setting is therefore a crucial element of Standing Committee work.

The social sciences encompass a range of disciplines that aim to examine and explain human functioning on a variety of interlocking levels, ranging from neural foundations to individual behaviour, group processes and the functioning of entire societies. Consequently, the social sciences employ a wide variety of methods which address the different levels of analyses that are necessary. Whilst the methods are contrasting, they have been tailor-made to be scientifically rigorous, and to ensure that reliable knowledge is secured.

Against this background, the SCSS funds and develops initiatives in the fields of psychology and the cognitive sciences, pedagogic and education research, social anthropology, sociology and gender studies, economics, business and administrative sciences, geography, demography, environmental sciences, law, political sciences, communication sciences, international relations, social statistics and informatics.

For more information go to:

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The European Science Foundation (ESF) provides a platform for its Member Organisations to advance European research and explore new directions for research at the European level. Established in 1974 as an independent non-governmental organisation, the ESF currently serves 77 Member Organisations across 30 countries.

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